

Book Review: English for Aeronautical Communication

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Received: 05 Dec 2025; Received in revised form: 04 Jan 2026; Accepted: 10 Jan 2026; Available online: 15 Jan 2026 ©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). Keywords— Aviation English, Aeronautical Communication, Flight Safety, ICAO Standards, Scenario-Based Practice, Contextual Optimization.	<i>Anna P. Borowska's English for Aeronautical Communication is a definitive, safety-focused textbook tailored for aviation professionals (pilots, air traffic controllers) and trainees, centered on mastering radiotelephony communication compliant with global aviation standards. Following a logical "foundations, practice, contextual enhancement" framework, the book is divided into three integrated parts: Part I establishes regulatory (ICAO/EASA/FAA), linguistic, and technical fundamentals; Part II delivers scenario-based communication skills across the full flight lifecycle from ground operations and takeoff to emergencies with standardized dialogues and real accident analyses; Part III addresses non-linguistic critical factors, including situational awareness, cross-cultural interaction, and native-non-native communication dynamics. By integrating authentic audio materials, interactive exercises, and actionable templates, the book seamlessly bridges theoretical knowledge and real-world application, equipping readers to meet professional certification requirements and ensure safe, efficient aeronautical communication.</i>

I. INTRODUCTION

Aeronautical communication stands as the irreplaceable cornerstone of global aviation safety, where even the slightest linguistic ambiguity whether a misheard clearance, non-standard phraseology, or cultural misalignment can escalate into catastrophic consequences. Since the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) formally mandated English as the universal lingua franca of international aviation in 1951, proficiency in specialized aeronautical language has ceased to be a "skill enhancement" and become a non-negotiable prerequisite for operational personnel. Yet, critical gaps persist in existing training resources: generic English textbooks fail to address the unique coded syntax, safety-driven brevity, and high-pressure scenarios of radiotelephony, while technical aviation manuals overlook the linguistic and contextual

nuances that shape effective communication. ICAO's own data underscores this urgency: language barriers contribute to approximately 70% of aviation incidents, including the 1977 Tenerife disaster, aviation's deadliest accident, where ambiguous phraseology between pilots and controllers directly led to a collision (Jones, 2003; ICAO, 2010).

Against this backdrop, the book emerges as a definitive solution, bridging the divide between linguistic theory, operational practice, and contextual awareness. As a Professor of Applied Linguistics and a pioneering developer of "avialinguistic" the systematic study of language in aviation contexts, Borowska brings over 13 years of hands-on experience as an international Aviation English instructor and assessor to the text (Borowska, 2025). Unlike conventional resources that silo theory from practice, this book integrates three core dimensions

of aeronautical communication: compliance with global regulations (ICAO/EASA/FAA), scenario-specific linguistic skills, and the non-linguistic factors (cognitive biases, cross-cultural dynamics, unexpected events) that often determine communication success or failure. Its target audience is deliberately broad, pilots, air traffic controllers (ATCOs), aviation trainees, and linguists researching specialized communication, reflecting the universal need for precise, context-aware language in aviation.

Structured in a logical “foundations, practice, contextual optimization” progression, the book unfolds across three interconnected parts: Part I establishes the regulatory, linguistic, and technical groundwork; the second Part delivers scenario-based training across the entire flight lifecycle (from ground operations to emergencies); and the third Part addresses the often-overlooked non-linguistic determinants of communication safety. By weaving in standardized phraseology templates, authentic audio recordings from LiveATC.net, real accident case analyses, and interactive exercises, Borowska creates a resource that is both academically rigorous and immediately applicable to real-world operations (Borowska, 2025).

This review dissects the book’s core structure, and highlights its significance in an era of growing global air traffic and increasingly diverse multilingual interactions. For aviation professionals, it serves as a roadmap to mastering ICAO-compliant communication and passing professional certification exams; for linguists, it offers a framework for understanding specialized language use in high-risk environments (Dietrich, 2003); for trainees, it provides a structured, safety-centric path to building communication competence. In essence, English for Aeronautical Communication is more than a textbook, it is a safety tool that recognizes that in aviation, “precision in language is precision in safety.”

II. REVIEW OF THE CONTENT

2.1 Review of Part I

As the foundation module of the book, Part one focuses on the core fundamentals of radiotelephony communication, laying a theoretical, regulatory, and linguistic framework for subsequent practical

application. Its core logic follows a “compliance, competence, application” progression: first, it clarifies the regulatory basis for international aviation English (ICAO/EASA/FAA standards); second, it breaks down language testing and competence requirements; third, it defines the unique characteristics of aeronautical English; fourth, it supplements specialized vocabulary and contextual knowledge; and finally, it consolidates core competencies through integrated training.

Moreover, the specific content is divided into five sections: Chapter 1 traces the historical context of English as the aviation lingua franca, details core ICAO documents (e.g., Annex 1, Doc. 9835) and regional compliance requirements, and clarifies the linguistic obligations of operational personnel (Chatham & Thomas, 2000). Chapter 2 interprets the ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale (6 descriptors, 5 levels), explaining testing procedures, validity periods, and the common testing needs of both native and non-native English speakers. Chapters 3-5 distinguish the application scenarios of Standard Phraseology (SP) and Plain Aeronautical English (PAE), elaborate on the core traits of aeronautical English, “brevity, depersonalization, and high predictability”, and the pilot-controller communication loop (readback-hearback). Chapters 6-10 center on five key themes: airport layout, aircraft parts, flight principles, VFR/IFR rules, and meteorology. Combined with diagrams, photo descriptions, and other forms, they build a domain-specific vocabulary system and contextual awareness. Chapter 11 designs targeted exercises for the six ICAO proficiency descriptors, covering pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and interaction, bridging theory and practice.

Furthermore, Part one greatest strength lies in its systematic alignment with professional learning pathways. Following a layered logic of “regulation, language, vocabulary,” it accurately maps to how aviation personnel acquire skills: first understanding “what must be followed,” then mastering “what competencies are required,” and finally learning “what specific language to use.” This structure ensures full compliance with ICAO language proficiency requirements and professional

certification scenarios, making it a valuable tool for exam preparation (Borowska, 2025).

Another key advantage is its integration of theory and practice. Avoiding pure theoretical accumulation, each core knowledge point is paired with actionable training: the regulation chapter includes terminology explanations, the language testing chapter provides sample questions, and the technical vocabulary chapter features tasks like "part-function matching" and "METAR decoding," enabling readers to digest knowledge through application. This approach caters to diverse audiences, novices gain clarity on basic concepts (e.g., differences between aeronautical English and general English), while senior practitioners access compliance details and competence calibration tools (e.g., standardized SP usage, exam strategies), addressing the common pain points of both native and non-native speakers. Part one also excels in seamless connectivity with subsequent modules. As the "foundation" of the book, its content directly supports Part two phase-specific communication practice and Part three contextual analysis, for example, the technical vocabulary chapter provides terminology reserves for flight-phase dialogues, and the communication loop theory lays groundwork for emergency scenarios in later sections.

Overall, Part one core value lies in "establishing standardized cognition." It is not merely a language textbook but a "compliance manual and competence map" for aeronautical English. Through three-dimensional coverage of "regulation, language, vocabulary," it ensures readers possess the ability to "know how to speak and understand why to speak" before entering practical training, building a solid foundation for safe communication.

2.2 Review of Part II

Second part builds on the basic theories of Part one, taking the "entire flight phases" as the logical mainline and focusing on the practical application of aeronautical communication. Its core design concept is "scenario-based decomposition and standardized implementation": it breaks down the flight process into six key phases, ground operations, pre-flight procedures, takeoff and climb, cruise, descent, approach and landing, and emergency procedures. Each phase is accompanied by standardized dialogue

templates, real case analyses, audio materials, and interactive training, ultimately achieving the transformation "from theory to practice" and enabling readers to master compliant communication skills in different scenarios. And the specific content is divided into six sections according to the flight process: Chapters 1-2 cover the full pre-takeoff communication process, including departure information request, route clearance, engine start-up, pushback, taxiing, and line-up. The core is to strengthen the standardized terminology for tripartite collaboration among "pilots, controllers, and ground staff" (e.g., pushback requests, taxi instruction confirmation), and emphasize process compliance through the pushback collision case at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. Chapter 3 focuses on communication for takeoff clearance and climb instructions, highlighting the standardized use of core instructions such as "CLEARED FOR TAKE-OFF." Combined with the 1977 Tenerife disaster case, it warns of the fatal risks of ambiguous terminology and provides audio training for takeoff instructions with different accents (Jones, 2003). Chapter 4 covers position reporting, radar vectoring, traffic avoidance, and non-routine scenarios (e.g., cabin depressurization) during cruise. It provides position reporting templates (including latitude, longitude, altitude, and estimated time of arrival) and offers response strategies for issues such as altitude deviations and communication interference during cruise. Chapter 5 details the communication logic for ILS approach, landing clearance, and missed approach procedures, including key links such as descent requests, altitude restriction confirmation, and landing clearance responses. Combined with the runway excursion case of Delta Air Lines Flight 1086, it emphasizes the importance of communicating braking information. Chapter 6, a highlight of the entire book, systematically covers two types of calls, distress (MAYDAY) and urgency (PAN PAN), including typical emergency scenarios such as engine fires, medical emergencies, bird strikes, and unruly passengers. It provides structured call templates and key points for emergency information transmission (e.g., number of passengers, fuel quantity, rescue needs), accompanied by real emergency communication audio. Chapter 7 designs integrated training for communication difficulties in each phase,

including complex grammar application (using conditional sentences to review accidents), specialized compound noun memory, and non-routine scenario role-plays (e.g., diversion due to weather). It strengthens practical competence through forms such as recording self-inspection and dialogue rewriting.

Besides, Part two standout strength is its scenario-based alignment with real operational workflows. Fully following the flight sequence of "ground, takeoff, cruise, landing, emergency," its content matches the daily work timeline of aviation personnel, allowing readers to directly transfer templates and terminology to practical tasks. This makes it particularly suitable for pre-service training and on-the-job refresher training for pilots and controllers. On the otherhand, another is its direct reusability and safety focus. Each routine scenario is equipped with standardized dialogue templates (e.g., landing clearance responses, emergency call structures), and each key knowledge point is paired with real accident/incident cases (e.g., the Tenerife disaster, the Manchester Airport fire). Supplemented by real audio from LiveATC.net, readers not only learn "how to speak" but also understand "why to speak" and adapt to accent and rhythm differences in real communication. The emergency chapter, decomposed by "call type and accident type," provides structured templates (e.g., MAYDAY calls requiring "identity, danger, intention, position") that can be directly used as an emergency response manual, offering exceptional practical value. The second part also seamlessly connects with the basic knowledge points of the first part. The SP/PAE distinction and communication loop (readback-hearback) emphasized in Part one are concretely applied in phase-specific dialogues. Additionally, it targets the six ICAO language competencies with specialized training (e.g., audio imitation for pronunciation, terminology retelling for fluency), accurately aligning with professional certification requirements (Borowska, 2025).

In summary, Part two core value is "building actionable aeronautical communication competence." It is an integrated practical toolbox of "scenarios, terminology, cases, training," addressing the core needs of aeronautical communication: compliance, practicality, and safety. As the most application-

oriented module of the book, it perfectly bridges Part one theory and Part three contextual analysis, remaining an indispensable resource for aviation professionals to enhance communication skills and ensure flight safety.

2.3 Review of Part III

The third Part builds on the language foundation of Part one and the scenario-based practice of Part two, focusing on "the impact of non-linguistic factors on aeronautical communication." Its design logic is "cognition, culture, unexpected events": starting from cognitive-level situational awareness, moving to cultural-level native speaker interaction and cross-cultural differences, and then to practical-level response to unexpected situations. Finally, through integrated training, it achieves the dual improvement of "language competence and contextual adaptation ability," solving the final gap from "being able to speak aeronautical English" to "being able to communicate safely and efficiently." The specific content is divided into four sections: Chapter 1 focuses on "the impact of cognition on communication," decomposing the core enemies of situational awareness, expectation bias (e.g., mishearing instructions), code-switching (e.g., mixing bilinguals on international frequencies), and cross-cultural differences (communication styles of low-context/high-context cultures). Combined with real cases such as NASA ASRS reports and code-switching conflicts at Cali Approach, it provides strategies to avoid cognitive biases (e.g., active confirmation, avoiding presuppositions) (Seiler, 2009). Chapter 2 focuses on common communication barriers of native English speakers (NES), using slang, complex sentence structures, fast speech rates, and understanding biases against non-native English speakers (NNES). It provides communication optimization strategies for NES (simplifying grammar, avoiding idioms, adjusting speech rate) and supporting skills for NNES to cope with NES communication (requesting repetition, explicit confirmation). Chapter 3 targets "unexpected scenarios beyond routine processes" (e.g., equipment failures, diversions, passenger disturbances), emphasizing "cognitive flexibility" and "language adaptability." It provides communication templates for unexpected situations (e.g., technical failure description, diversion request) and analyzes the

concise and efficient communication logic in cases such as the "Miracle on the Hudson." Chapter 4 designs integrated training around non-linguistic factors, including cross-cultural dialogue rewriting, role-plays of native speaker communication scenarios, and language adaptation exercises for unexpected situations. It strengthens the comprehensive application ability of "language and context" through forms such as crossword puzzles and case analyses.

What's more, Part three greatest contribution is filling the industry gap of "neglecting context in aviation English training". While the previous two parts focus on "language itself," this module addresses non-linguistic factors (cognition, culture, unexpected events), key dimensions of safe communication emphasized by ICAO, upgrading the book from a "language textbook" to a "comprehensive communication competence guide" (Dietrich, 2003). A key strength is its case-driven, pain point-oriented approach. All core knowledge points are illustrated with real cases: expectation bias with NASA ASRS mishearing reports, code-switching with Cali Approach bilingual conflicts, and native speaker issues with LiveATC.net dialogue clips. This avoids abstract theory, allowing readers to intuitively perceive the practical impact of non-linguistic factors and retain knowledge more effectively. It directly targets high-frequency pain points in aeronautical communication, cross-cultural misunderstandings, native-non-native communication barriers, and cognitive confusion in unexpected situations, with strategies that can be directly transferred to work scenarios, making it particularly valuable for international routes and diverse crews. In addition, Part three also maintains seamless connectivity with the previous two parts. The SP/PAE distinction from Part one supports language adaptation in unexpected scenarios, and the emergency terminology from Part two enhances communication in sudden events. By optimizing non-linguistic factors, it amplifies the practical effect of language skills, forming a closed loop of "language foundation, scenario-based practice, contextual optimization" (Borowska, 2025).

To sum, Part three core value is "transforming communication from 'compliant' to 'efficient and safe'." It does not replace the language foundation of

the previous two parts but enables mastered aeronautical English to deliver greater practical value through improved contextual adaptation. As the "sublimation module" of the book, it is an essential resource for senior aviation professionals, international route crews, and diverse teams, filling the critical gap between linguistic proficiency and safe, effective communication.

III. CONCLUSION

Anna P. Borowska's work distinguishes itself as a landmark work in aviation linguistics, successfully bridging the gap between theoretical rigor, practical applicability, and contextual awareness. By structuring the text in a logical "foundations, practice, contextual optimization" progression, the book creates a comprehensive learning journey that transforms readers from "linguistically compliant" to "safety-centric communicators", a critical evolution in an industry where language precision directly correlates with flight safety (Borowska, 2025).

At its core, the book's greatest achievement lies in its holistic approach: Part I lays a rock-solid regulatory and linguistic groundwork aligned with ICAO/EASA standards, ensuring compliance; Part two delivers scenario-based tools, standardized dialogues, real accident analyses, and authentic audio materials, that aviation professionals can immediately apply to every phase of flight; and Part three addresses the long-overlooked non-linguistic factors, situational awareness, cross-cultural dynamics, and native-non-native interaction barriers, that often trigger communication failures. This trinity of coverage eliminates the silos in traditional aviation English training, offering a one-stop resource that caters to the diverse needs of its audience: for pilots and ATCOs, it serves as a practical operational manual and certification prep guide; for trainees, it provides a structured path to building job-ready skills; for linguists, it advances the study of specialized language in high-risk environments through the lens of "avialinguistics" (Dietrich, 2003).

Beyond its structural excellence, the book's commitment to safety is evident in every chapter, from the Tenerife disaster case study that underscores the danger of ambiguous phraseology, to the standardized emergency templates that reduce

response time in crises, to the cross-cultural strategies that mitigate misunderstandings in global airspace (Jones, 2003). By integrating real-world data, actionable templates, and interactive exercises, Borowska ensures that the knowledge within its pages is not merely theoretical but life-saving.

While minor limitations persist, such as regional bias in case studies, dependency on online materials, and varying accessibility for beginners, they do not diminish the book's immense value. In an era of expanding global air traffic and increasingly diverse multilingual crews, English for Aeronautical Communication emerges as an indispensable tool for enhancing communication efficiency, reducing incident risks, and upholding the highest standards of aviation safety (Seiler, 2009). It is more than a textbook; it is a long-term investment in the integrity of global aviation communication. For anyone committed to excelling in aviation, whether as a practicing professional, a trainee, or a researcher, this work will remain a definitive reference, shaping safer, more effective communication in the skies for years to come.

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